2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
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Then members of the group may sit and tease each other for a while, telling jokes, playing the dozens, taking a little nip, or just sitting and enjoying one another's company. When I was there, after the group had kidded around until everyone was laughing and in a fairly congenial mood, I was usually granted permission to turn the recorder on, and it was time to tell some tales.

With older storytellers, the sessions often begin with a song, religious or otherwise. During the singing, the members of the group join in enthusiastically, singing, clapping their hands, or swaying with the rhythm. After the song ends, the audience is usually ready to hear a good tale. Regardless of the ages of the members of the group, the most impressive stories are always told after the group has had a chance to talk, kid around, play the dozens, sing, or just be "sporty." The friendly teasing and cordial verbal exchange relaxes the audience and serves the same purpose as the *akuko eji awake nti* in Igbo: it prepares the listeners so that they will participate in the telling of the tales by responding to certain cues given by the performers.

A speaker may begin his tale by indicating that he is going to tell a story about Ber Rabbit. The audience (or a given respondent) may clap their hands, laugh, and rock back and forth to indicate their interest and repeat, "Ber Rabbit, Ber Rabbit, Ber Rabbit!" This response demonstrates that the speaker has engaged their interest and attention and that they are now prepared to hear his tale. As the tale progresses, if the teller is entertaining and effective, the listeners will continue to respond to his every word, laughing and joking, clapping their hands, and urging him on with his tale. The audience is not a captive one; if the teller is not skilled in narrative technique, and his tale or delivery is uninteresting, then the listeners may wander away to get something to drink or talk to others and return only when a better speaker is talking. This response undoubtedly has an effect on the teller, who may try to hurry and finish his story so that someone else can have a turn.

Most audiences react to onomatopoeic words, repetitions, and chants. They respond as a chorus by repeating some of the speaker's words or phrases in unison or singularly. A practice very common both in Africa and on the Sea Islands is an interplay between the speaker and a given member of the audience. In an Igbo village, for example, Raphael Amaugo often called on his friend Cornelius Onunwa to help him remember the details of a story that Raphael knew quite well. The

8: Smith Q-4,5 (no date) 1926
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of both Christianity and slavery lie first, the native racial characteristics which were the really creative factors in the spirituals; and second, the particular environment which alone of all possible localities has called them into being." This combination created them; Christianity shaped and molded them; slavery lent fervor.

As to their sadness, long after the War and Emancipation even to the present day, the same yearning note has persisted in Negro music. As two scholarly authorities have well put it: "Slavery has passed, six decades of liberty for the slave people have signalized the better civilization, and there still remains among the Negroes the same emotional nature, the same sad, plaintive, beautiful, rhythmic, sorrow-feeling in their songs."[11] On internal evidence it is impossible to date the spirituals. Those of 1880-1900 sound like those of 1840-1860.

Likewise in the prolific "Blues"[12] and the many songs of jail, chain-gang, prison, and lonesomeness,"[13] which are distinctly modern in composition, there is the same sad appealing note, with much self-pity. There is also, be it said in passing, a good deal of humor, which is the complement, not the opposite, of pathos.

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scarcity of spirituals based on the birth or infancy of Christ: "The reason may be due in part to the fact that the anniversary of the birth of Christ was not, in the South, in any sense a sacred or religious holiday. Up to within recent years, at least, it has been celebrated chiefly with gunpowder and whiskey. It has there been the most secular, even the most profane of all holidays. In slavery times it was the one day on which the slaves were given a sort of freedom. The liberty of coming and going was greatly enlarged. On many plantations whiskey was distributed. The day was one given over to a good time; to singing, dancing and visiting; to guzzling, gluttony and debauchery. It is possible that it was a conscious part of the scheme of slavery to make Christmas a day on which the slaves through sheer excess of sensuous pleasure would forget their bonds."

[11] With the exception of a few statements here and there, like the following, the importance of environment has usually been overlooked: "If there is anything 'racial' about the spirituals and the blues, then there should be immediate ability to catch the intricate rhythm on the part of Negroes from Jamaica, Zanzibar, and Sierra Leone. Such is not the case, and we must conclude that they are the products of a certain American environment: The South. They are American folk-songs, built around Anglo-Saxon religious concepts." George E. Schuyler, "Correspondence," *The Nation*, July 14, 1926, p. 36.

[12] Odum and Johnson, *The Negro and His Songs*, p. 19.

[13] See the chapters on "Blues" and "Songs of Jail, Chain Gang, and Policemen" in Odum and Johnson, *Negro Workaday Songs*, the chapter on "Blues" in Dorothy Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs*, and W. C. Handy, *Blues, An Anthology*, A. and C. Boni, N. Y., 1926.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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538 wherever heard. The humor [41] and keen knowledge of human nature they display
171 indicate clearly enough that the Negro realized the necessity of keen wits if the little
(522) man was to survive in a world governed by brute force. Ages ago, apparently, the
race learned another valuable lesson: to convey an idea by inference rather than to
538 state it baldly. The stories given me by Peter Davis—who learned them from his
115 Uncle John—illustrate this fact, and demonstrate the way scanty training in the sea-
island school-rooms was supplemented by older members of such families as had
the story-telling gift:

Buh Rabbit an' Buh Wolf in deh Well

539 One day Buh Rabbit wuz walkin' thru de woods an' 'e met an' ole well. Deh wuz
two buckets in it—one went up when de udder went down. Buh Rabbit say to hese'f:
"Deh's nice water in dat well. Believe I'll go down an' get me a drink—some ole fool'll
come alon' an' pull me up." By an' by Buh Wolf come whistlin' down de road. Buh
Rabbit call: "Hey, Buh Wolf, want some cool watah?" Buh Wolf say: "I wouldn'
mine!" Buh Rabbit say: "You jes' git in de bucket an' come right on down heah." Buh
Wolf was hebbier dan Buh Rabbit, so when he got in de bucket an' start down, he meet
Buh Rabbit half way comin' up. Buh Rabbit say: "O boy, dat's de way in dis worl'—
some comin' up an' some goin' down. Well, I'll be seein' y'u some mo'."

[191] In her chapter on "Folk Art," [42] Martha Beckwith gives an example of the "so-
called animal talk . . . often reported from African fields." Bessie Cuyler, of St. Si-
mon's, gives a good illustration of this talk. She explains that, when the preacher
comes for a visit, the poultry gets very excited, the rooster most of all:

He say: Preacher comin', Preacher comin'!
The guinea hen say: I knowed it, I knowed it!
The goose say: Tell it, tell it!
The duck say: Hah, hah, hah!
But the turkey gobbler is a wise old bird, an' he got fussed at all de noise an' when
de rooster keep sayin' Preacher comin', Preacher comin', he sputter: "Schu-u-uw!"
an' say:
What de hell do I care
You betta look out fo' you' neck!

[41] *An example of Afro-American humor runs true to form: A child calls to its mother "O mamma look dat da fulafafa!" The mother with a superior air says: "Gal, you bin in dis buckie country [buckra is white man] so long, an' can't say wulisäpäpa." The joke lies in the fact that "fulafafa" and "wulisäpäpä" both mean woodpecker in an African dialect.*

[42] Black Roadways, a Study of Jamaican Folk Life.

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184 114 out this section is not surprising to those who have studied its social and economic conditions at first hand—or have carefully read *Seed from Madagascar* by Duncan Clinch Heyward. This gentleman's words are authoritative. He learned planting 114 methods and the management of Negro labor at first hand on the Combahee swamp plantations of his paternal ancestors in South Carolina and at the Clinch Plantation, called Refuge, on the Satilla River in Georgia, where his maternal ancestors were also rice planters.

175 In *American Humor*, Constance Rourke quotes a traveler as saying in 1795 that "The blacks are the great humorists of the nation." She goes on to tell us how ● 522 Negro humor has always been abundant, and how, from it, early minstrels drew as 533 from a primal source. She also says that many minstrels had lived in the South and West and knew the Negro at first hand. One of them saw an old peddler of watermelons with a donkey cart in a Georgia town, and followed him about until he had mastered his lingo, cries, and snatches of song, which may account for the similarity 175 of our Negro secular songs to those of the minstrel stage. Few of the white singers, 533 however, gave credit where it was due. Miss Rourke states that "Plantation owners on the Mississippi had crews of black oarsmen who sang as they rowed and impro- [501] vised good-natured verses to match the occasions of the day. . . .[28] A western poet [46] declared that 'among the earliest original verses of the West were sundry African [567] melodies celebrating the coon hunt and the vicissitudes of river navigation.' The Negro was to be seen everywhere in the South and in the new Southwest, on small farms and great plantations, on roads and levees. He was often an all but equal member of many a pioneering expedition. He became, in short, a dominant figure in spite of his condition and commanded a definite portraiture."

533 Because of his position in democratic communities it is readily seen why the songs of the Negro have left their stamp on those of the hill-billy and the cowboy; 177 and when he attended the same revival meetings as the whites—as he frequently did —his mode of singing undoubtedly exerted as much influence upon their religious songs as his secular music does today upon our radio singers.

[28] *They carried on a tradition that was characteristic of the South Carolina and Georgia coast. Liverpool, who was stroke oar of the Butler Island crew of ten men, told me they rowed a cypress dugout, thirty-three feet long, made from one immense log. His favorite rowing song was "Zion," but others preferred "Knee-bone." Mrs. G. V. Cate tells us, in Our Todays and Yesterdays, "there was a spirit of rivalry among the planters to have the best boat . . . and a desire on the part of the slaves to sing the best songs. The oarsmen of one plantation would never sing the songs belonging to another plantation," and when a boat passed at night it would be known from the song to what plantation the singers belonged.*

[177] *In A Walk across Africa, Grant describes a very large canoe—hollowed out of an immense tree—that carried a ton and a half.*